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ABSTRACT

The Center for the Study of Evaluation (CSE) model identifies conditions under which evaluators intervene in educational programs, provides for a sequence of evaluation activities and conditions under which departures from this sequence occurs, and defines the relationship between the evaluator and the decision maker. This paper provides a study of these aspects of the CSE model in the context of the evaluation of a preschool serving American Indian children in south-central Los Angeles, and draws conclusions about the efficacy of the model based on the degree to which it eliminates extraneous detail and highlights key elements of the educational process. (Author/DB)

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CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CSE MODEL IN EVALUATING
A PRESCHOOL FOR URBAN AMERICAN INDIAN CHILDREN*

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In addition to specifying five stages of evaluation, the model developed by the Center for the Study of Evaluation (CSE) makes a number of theoretical assumptions about the evaluation process. This paper investigates three of these assumptions in relation to the evaluation of a pre-school designed primarily for urban American Indian children in south-central Los Angeles.

Description of the School

Sixty of the 90 three to five year old children enrolled in the Tribal American Preschool are Indian (the remaining 30 are roughly evenly divided among Chicanos and Whites; there are no Blacks or Orientals). Twenty tribes, each distinct from one another in language and customs, are represented. Approximately ten percent of the children do not or will not speak English. All are eligible for and receiving aid from the Department of Public Social Services. Half the children attend school in the morning; half attend in the afternoon. During each session, two-thirds of the children are assigned to two teachers who are developing a team-teaching approach with the assistance of two Indian aides. The remaining children are assigned to an instructor who is developing a Montessori program with the assistance of a Chicano aide. Other staff include a director, a woman who acts as book-keeper, secretary and receptionist, a registrar, and two cooks, all of whom are Indian, as well as a Chicano custodian and a part-time nurse who is White.

The funding proposal submitted to the State of California outlines a comprehensive set of goals for the school. These include gross and fine

motor skills, reading and math readiness, development of attitudes conducive to successful public school attendance, and awareness of the local community. In addition, a series of related services are outlined, including medical, dental and optometric examinations, a nutritional program, instruction in personal hygiene, and training of teacher aides to provide family social services and encourage family participation in school activities. The proposal outlines three different instructional modes to achieve these goals, with a view toward identifying methods which will enhance the educational prospects of urban American Indian children. These instructional modes are identified as team-teaching, Montessori, and cooperative.¹ Goals, services and modes of instruction were described with varying degrees of specificity and a promise that the curriculum would be adapted to Indian values and culture.

The proposal identifies three major questions which must be answered by those developing the Preschool. First, has the program been installed as specified in the proposal? Second, is each mode of instruction operating as efficiently as possible? Third, what aspects of each mode of instruction should be used in developing the single mode which will maximize the opportunities of children enrolled in the school.

The CSE Evaluation Model

The third, fourth and fifth stages of the CSE evaluation model provide a useful guide to selecting, collecting, analyzing and reporting information

¹Partial funding prevented development of the cooperative mode.

needed in making these decisions. The basic features of each stage of the model are briefly described below:

NEEDS ASSESSMENT involves stating the potential range of objectives or goals, deciding which of these are of highest priority, and determining how well these objectives are currently being met. The latter information is then used to identify the major needs.

PROGRAM PLANNING involves making decisions about the kinds of programs that should be adopted to meet the problems identified in the needs assessment. During the program planning phase, the evaluator suggests techniques to facilitate planning decisions, provides advice regarding evaluation requirements for alternative plans, and builds into the final plan the procedures necessary for conducting subsequent evaluation activities.

IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATION focuses on whether the procedures specified in the program plan are actually carried out in the intended manner. Thus, it involves assessing the degree to which the program plan has been adapted properly to the field situation.

PROGRESS EVALUATION is aimed at determining the extent to which the program is actually making gains towards achieving its objectives. Since a program may be implemented exactly as planned but still not reach its intended objectives, it is necessary to investigate whether the program is a good one for meeting the needs.

OUTCOME EVALUATION leads to a final judgment regarding the general worth of the total program. (Klein, Fenstermacher, Alkin, 1971).

Conduct of the Evaluation to Date

A variety of techniques were used to collect Implementation Evaluation data. Sixteen half-day observations divided evenly among afternoon and morning class sessions were conducted by the three-person evaluation team during a four-week period three months after the school opened. Interviews with teachers and the school director, and information collected from school records, completed the data collection phase. A report making recommendations to help the staff complete implementation of the program was submitted to the director at the end of January, 1973.

Intervention in Educational Programs

One characteristic which distinguishes evaluation from traditional research is the willingness of evaluators to intervene in programs which they are studying. CSE specifies that intervention is appropriate and desirable during the first four stages of the model, and is normally in the form of reports providing decision makers with information useful in improving educational programs. Intervention which reduces the quality of information obtained, or compromises the objectivity of the evaluator, is viewed as undesirable.

Believing that it was necessary to allow the children to become accustomed to us if we were to administer tests to them, we helped them with untied shoes, with moving heavy objects, with puzzles they could not solve, taking advantage of every opportunity to talk to a child for a moment or two. Within two weeks we all knew the majority of the children by name, and spent much of our time talking with them, playing with them, helping them. Occasionally one of us would step in to prevent serious injury, as when one child was trying a hammer on another's head, or when one was escaping toward a busy street. The teachers learned to make use of the Navajo member of the evaluation team to work with one or two non-English speaking Navajo children. Each of us now has favorites among the children. We have conferred with teachers about difficulties they were having with individual children, on the basis of our own work with each child. Wingard and Kosecoff (1973) have noted the extent to which they became involved in program administration; in the present case, we have become involved in the program itself. Clearly, we have ceased to be impartial observers.

Compensation came through comparability of information collected because we identify students by name in our logs, and through our ability to quiz children informally to determine what they are learning from their activities. In view of the reliability and validity of tests available for preschool children, the problem of consistency between published tests and goals of the school and language and cultural problems involved in testing at the Preschool, we believe, but cannot prove, that we have increased both the quantity and quality of information which we have about the school. We plan to make more systematic use of the technique to collect progress evaluation data during the second year of the program.

Departure from Normal Sequence

The basic CSE evaluation model consists of five stages which normally are conducted in sequence as the program develops. However, Alkin (1969) suggested that evaluation results from any one of these stages might lead to recommendations for repeating program activities associated with earlier steps of the model. Further, Klein, et al. (1972), noting that in actual practice teachers are involved in activities associated with several stages of the model at one time, suggested that evaluation may have to be based on several stages of the model simultaneously. These modifications have become part of the model.

Receiving only partial funding, the Preschool was unable to implement one of the three modes of instruction described in the proposal. The initial Implementation Evaluation report indicated that physical facilities did not meet program requirements; that, while there was overlap in some areas, there were clear differences between the goals pursued by the two

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modes of instruction; that adaptation to Indian values and customs had not begun; that enrollment was below expectations and community involvement was nonexistent. [Lest these comments lead you to conclude that the school is a failure, it should be emphasized that these problems have been largely corrected in the past month. Enrollment is up to capacity; parents are volunteering as aides; facilities, materials, equipment and supervision are improved; student activities are more purposeful. The school is now a functioning institution.]

A major recommendation of the Implementation Evaluation was for clarification, expansion and improvement of the goals and objectives in the original proposal. Evaluation of this activity requires recycling to Needs Assessment, the first stage of the model, while completing the Implementation Evaluation. It is anticipated that both Program Planning Evaluation and Progress Evaluation will be required next year. Thus, both recycling and simultaneous conduct of two or more evaluation stages were found to be necessary in practice, as suggested by the model. However, clarification as to the conditions under which recycling should occur, as well as guidelines for allocating evaluative resources when simultaneously conducting two or more stages of the model, are required.

Relationship between Evaluator and Decision Maker

The model defines the evaluator's responsibility as selecting, collecting, analyzing, interpreting and reporting information needed by a decision maker. The decision maker is responsible for identifying the purposes for which he requires information, and for determining, on the basis of such factors as organizational resources and effect on other

commitments, whether the information can be put to use. It appears that the recommendations in the Implementation Evaluation report were accepted, and that the changes suggested have been or are being made, without assessment as anticipated by the model. One exception exists in recommendations made concerning organization of playground activities, made orally several days before inclusion in the Written report. These recommendations were fully discussed by the director, an Indian member of the school advisory board, and one member of the evaluation team. Apparently, altering the medium by which evaluative information is reported will preserve the relationship between evaluator and decision maker described in the model. It is tempting to claim this as adapting the model to the oral traditions of Indian culture; certainly, it is an adaptation to the situation. If such adaptations are not made, the evaluator may find that he has become the administrator rather than the evaluator of the project, an experience reported by Wingard and Kosecoff (1973).

Relationship Between the CSE Model and an Educational Program.

CSE assumes that the evaluation model includes all possible types of educational decisions, that an educational program begins with a rational selection of appropriate educational goals; that it is possible to select an appropriate means of achieving the goals selected; and that improvements can be made and the effects of programs estimated by a variety of measurement techniques.

Each day at the Tribal American Preschool, teachers try to keep an eye on fifteen or more active and unpredictable children with ten minute attention spans, remaining alert to prevent injury and breakage, arbitrating disputes,

distracting the aggressive, helping the puzzled, encouraging the slow, cleaning up spills, preparing materials for classroom activities, reading to children, leading games... When these activities are eliminated, teachers appear to plan and review their day-to-day activities in a manner closely akin to that described by the model. The practicality of the model stems from its usefulness in isolating the learning plan of teachers from the distractions provided by the problems of supervising a classroom of children.

Summary

The CSE model identifies conditions under which evaluators intervene in educational programs, provides for a sequence of evaluation activities and conditions under which departures from this sequence occurs, and defines the relationship between the evaluator and the decision maker. This paper has studied these aspects of the CSE model in the context of the evaluation of a preschool serving American Indian children in south-central Los Angeles, and draws conclusions about the efficacy of the model based on the degree to which it eliminates extraneous detail and highlights key elements of the educational process.

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